



What You Should Know About Your Burglary Alarm System

Presented by Carlsbad Police Department's Crime Prevention Unit

Have you recently installed or made preparations to activate a burglary alarm system at your home or business? There are a few things you should know **before** you turn on your system.

You Need to Know?

- The number one cause of a false alarm activation is user error
- Ninety-nine percent of all alarm system activation calls are false alarms
- In the mid-eighties the City of Carlsbad's Police Department received more than **350 false alarm activation calls per month.** This used more than **100 hours of police officer time.**
- The City of Carlsbad now has an Alarm System Ordinance that governs the use of such systems. Check it out at www.carlsbadca.gov. (Chapter 8.50)
- “**False alarm**” means the activation of an alarm system through mechanical failure or malfunction, accidental tripping, misoperation or misuse by the lessee or owner of the alarm system or his employee or agent, including mechanical failure or malfunction caused by negligent maintenance of the system.
- You will be assessed a penalty for excess false alarm system activation calls that require police response.
- The ordinance holds you as the user/owner of the alarm system responsible for the activity of your alarm system and your contracted agents. Your alarm company and/or monitoring company, maid, gardener, pet sitter, etc. are all considered your contracted agents.
- Having an effective plan with your monitoring company in the event you accidentally set-off your alarm system will prevent you from incurring penalty fees.



Get to know how your alarm system works.



1. Has the sales person carefully gone over all the features with you?
2. Do you have a maintenance contract? How does it work?
3. What happens if your system goes off or malfunctions when you are not at home or even out of town? What does your contracted monitoring company do? Have you listed the required responsible parties that can help? Are they within the required 20 minutes?
4. Did they mention no alarm activation, panic or otherwise, goes directly to the police department? If your system is monitored, the alarm activation call goes to a call center and they, in turn, call the police on a non-emergency phone line, usually after they have tried to call you first to make sure it is not a false alarm. This process can take 10 minutes.

5. Did you know that when a monitored system activates it seizes your phone line to call your monitoring company. During that time you cannot call out of the building unless you have another phone line. Not even on 9-1-1.



6. Is your system hard wired or is it wireless remote? If it is wireless, what is your systems frequency and what else is operating on the same frequency? What other wireless users can activate your system (airplane radios)?
7. Do you know everything about the alarm panel? Is there a panic button or code and if yes, do you know what it does or what to do if you accidentally activate it? Do you know what happens or what you should do if you enter your code incorrectly?
8. Does your system consist of magnetic contact points on windows and doors? If yes, which windows and doors have contact points and which do not? What exactly does it take to activate a contact point? High winds should not move a door enough to separate the contact.
9. Does your system include interior sensors such as motion or noise sensors? If yes, has your alarm company explained the common causes of false alarm activations with motion sensors? Did you know a spider nesting in a motion sensor can falsely set-off your system? Are the sensors adjusted properly?

When considering your home or office's security you should know:

1. The building's physical security is the most important element. The Carlsbad Police Department can help you to appraise your security. Just call 931-2105 and ask how.
2. An alarm system does not provide security to a building. It is an alert system, alerting you to a breach in the physical security.
3. The physical security of a building (locks and other hardware) is what keeps an intruder out. A building with a door or window left open and an alarm activated is not a secure building.
4. Your alarm system should activate before someone enters your home or office and not after they have entered. Concentrate on protecting your perimeter and you will also protect your interior.



What can cause a burglary alarm system to falsely activate?

Did you know it is possible to not be at home or even to be out of town and your alarm system can falsely activate? Here are just some of the causes of false activations:

1. **User error! Accidentally setting it off and not canceling police response.**
2. Bugs, spiders and trails of ants
3. Floating balloons
4. Pets jumping, or in one case a squirrel was trapped inside a house
5. Pet sitters, maids and other service providers
6. Rusting, maintenance lacking, unadjusted, service needing, malfunctioning systems or system parts
7. Condensation running down a window or on a screen with sensors
8. Husbands, children or other family members coming home unexpectedly
9. Open windows, blowing curtains and open doors, or doors that are ajar
10. Power outage – yes even a power outage. Your alarm system is required to have a battery backup to prevent this type of activation. When was the last time you checked your batteries?

